

Testimony in Opposition to Requiring Voter ID's

Committee on House Administration
U.S. Congress

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By

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Good morning. Thank you Chairman Ney, Representative Millender-McDonald and Committee members for allowing me the opportunity to express my views on the issue of requiring citizens to present photo identification for voting. As a person who runs for office and dedicates a great amount of time to influencing issues and elections, I am interested and committed to a fair election process for all. However, it has been my experience and understanding that voter identification requirements will undermine the participation in the electoral system of local and statewide elections and ultimately lead to government that is less representative and less legitimate in the eyes of the public at large.

The 2004 election results in the State of Wisconsin differed by about 11,000 votes between President George W. Bush and the statewide winner Senator John Kerry. The 2000 presidential results differed by approximately 5,000 votes between President Bush and statewide winner Senator Al Gore. Based on these results of the 2004 elections and based on the contentious post-election litigation in Florida after the 2000 election, the local newspaper for Milwaukee Metro area the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel suspecting that Wisconsin would become another Florida covered the election process in the 2004 election and concluded that various procedures and processes were not followed and that voter lists were woefully disorganized and poorly kept. These reports did not do any analysis of the Milwaukee suburbs or outlying areas outside the City of Milwaukee. However, these reports were then seized by the local partisan apparatchik to claim that there was widespread voter fraud in the City of Milwaukee.

Based on Newspapers reports and partisan call for investigations, the Milwaukee Police Department, the United State Assistant Attorney General for the eastern District of Wisconsin, Steve Biskupic, and the Milwaukee County District Attorney E. Michael McCann spent countless hours and resources investigating the allegations of voter fraud. In August 22, 2005 the Assistant U.S. Attorney General and Milwaukee County District attorney announced at a press conference that the allegations of voter fraud conspiracies were non-existent but that they had found instances of ineligible voters illegally voting in the 2004 elections. Of the total 105 cases of voter fraud cited by the Wisconsin Legislative Audit Bureau, 98 have been felons who by law should not have voted in that election. However, it is unclear how a voter identification requirement of a driver's license would have prevented felons from voting.

According to Assistant U.S. Attorney Biskupic "there is still no evidence of a widespread conspiracy." According to the U.S. Attorney and the Milwaukee County District Attorney, they found "assorted clerical errors and other inconsistencies, but no fraud."

At the same time that three investigative agencies found that there was no widespread voter fraud, a study by the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Employment and Training Institute has found that 177,399 persons over the age of 65 and 98,247 of people 35 to 65 years old in this State simply do not possess a driver's license. Not surprisingly, disproportionately it is the elderly and poor that do not have driver's license. In the zip code area that covers most of the Wisconsin Assembly district that I represent 58% of voting age males and 36% of voting age females do not have a driver's license. The same study found only 3% of students changed their addresses to reflect that they resided in the dormitories of Marquette University and the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. Based on the evidence found in this study voter identification requirements would work to disenfranchise people who would otherwise be allowed to vote.

Furthermore, requesting photo identification would frustrate eligible voters and would lead the complete abandonment of elections. This summer in the nearby town of Caledonia, a school referendum was under way when the local clerk decided to get a jump on the voter lists and asked her poll workers to require identification from all potential voters. It was not long before voters became angry and frustrated at not being allowed to vote. Not long after, the clerk stopped requesting the photo identification from potential voters as it was clearly not allowing people to participate in the referendum.

As we all know, districts are not just zip codes, polling sites and wards. Districts are composed of decent, honest, hardworking people. Democracy works in the City of Milwaukee because we have honest people that care about the election process. With such little evidence of fraud, it is difficult to understand why our elected officials would want to likely make thousands of people in the State of Wisconsin electoral refugees. I am proud that Wisconsin consistently ranks high in voter turnout. In the 2004 elections, Wisconsin was ranked 3rd in the nation for voter turnout when over 75% of eligible voters went to the polls on Election Day. Wisconsin needs the 25% that did not participate to participate, not enact more requirements on those 75% that are participating.

While I agree that reforms need to be made to ensure accuracy and prevent bureaucratic mistakes I cannot agree that potentially taking away someone's right to vote is the course we, as policy makers, should choose.

Just this past April, Governor James Doyle proposed voter reforms that will redress the bureaucratic errors that have called into question the integrity of our election system. These reforms include:

- An early voting option for all eligible voters;
- Mandatory training for all poll workers;
- An extensive outreach campaign to recruit more poll workers;
- Mandatory training for all special registration deputies;

- Prohibit voter drives from paying individuals on a per voter or quota system;
- Uniform voter registration cards;
- Allow eligible voters to register to vote when applying for or renewing a driver's license;
- Require municipalities to develop Election Day plans designed to meet a 30-minute maximum waiting time at the polls;
- Allow access to voter birth date information again to allow for better oversight, but prohibit the use or sale of such information for commercial purposes or the display of such information on the Internet;
- Statewide, uniform poll hours; and
- Require a map to be displayed at every polling location, directing voters to their proper voting wards.

It is my belief that we should be focusing on these types of reforms rather than creating more barriers for one to cast a vote on Election Day.

Thank you again for allowing me to speak.